

ANNUAL REPORT
CONSUMER SERVICES DIVISION
1999

ILLINOIS COMMERCE COMMISSION

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THE CONSUMER SERVICES DIVISION 1999 ANNUAL REPORT

This report provides an overview of the programs and activities that were undertaken, completed, and implemented by the 29 member Staff of the Illinois Commerce Commission's (ICC) Consumer Services Division (CSD) during 1999. It includes such information as a breakdown of the types of inquiries/complaints that were received and how they were resolved; new approaches to resolving inquiries and complaints; a look at CSD's involvement with programs such as the Universal Telephone Service Assistance Program (UTSAP), the TTY distribution program and the telecommunications relay service (TRS); and other activities including participation of Staff in rulemakings, certification cases and merger cases. During 1999, the 9-1-1 Program transferred to the Telecommunications Division. Highlights of the year are listed below.

I hope this report will serve as a guide to understanding the needs and concerns of utility consumers in Illinois and the ways in which the ICC's Consumer Services Division addresses these important matters.

Debi Barr-Holquist
Manager

HIGHLIGHTS OF 1999

Serving Consumers Consumer Services Division served 11% more consumers in 1999 than in 1998. The number of consumers served has nearly tripled in the past four years while staffing has not quite doubled. Improvements in efficiency and equipment have allowed Staff to handle the increased volume of consumer demand. Staff successfully worked with utilities to provide \$3.9 million to customers in savings or avoided costs. Customers have benefited greatly from the intervention of Staff and cooperation of utilities.

Electric Restructuring During 1999, the implementation of the “Electric Service Customers Choice and Rate Relief Law of 1997” continued to bring new challenges and opportunities to ICC’s Consumer Services Division (CSD). CSD Staff led the Consumer Education campaign for the small businesses, Delivery Services Consumer Issues Working Group, Reliability Claims procedures, and the Reliability Survey rulemaking. In addition, we have participated in the Environmental Disclosure rulemaking, the Alternative Retail Electric Suppliers (ARES) certification docket, and Delivery Services Terms and Conditions dockets.

Consumer education efforts resulted in the “Plug-In-Illinois” electric choice campaign which premiered in April with a presentation by Chairman Richard Mathias and Executive Director Charles Fisher at a statewide “Business Day” conference. Members of the Illinois Retail Merchants Association, Illinois Manufacturing, Illinois State Chamber of Commerce, and the National Federation of Independent Business participated in the conference. Materials developed for the campaign included a bill insert, brochure, video, media kit, audio news release, and public service announcements. The Plug-in-Illinois web site contains an overview of choice and the electric service industry, the brochure and bill insert in downloadable formats, a choice timeline, customer eligibility information, a list of suppliers (certified and pending), frequently asked questions, and other information. Also included is a survey box and an e-mail link which allows consumers to provide comments and suggestions. Since the site came online March 31, 1999, more than 15,000 “hits” have been recorded, peaking during the lottery eligibility period and increasing again in mid-September through mid-November, coinciding with the beginning of electric choice. This web site is updated as changes in the industry occur.

Electric reliability survey The ICC’s Consumer Services led the electric reliability survey rulemaking. The rule provides for a survey which will be conducted during the fall of 2000 and reported by utilities in their 2001 annual reports to the Commission.

Slamming/cramming The ICC’s Consumer Services’ slamming/cramming investigative team was successful in bringing about a formal case before the Commission which resulted in penalties paid by a company engaged in the practice of cramming.

Lifeline assistance The Commission entered an order (Docket 98-0884) to raise the Lifeline monthly assistance to eligible consumers from \$5.25 to \$7.50 (this figure now includes federal and state funds). This year for the first time, Illinois is providing funding to assist eligible consumers in paying their monthly telephone bills. Illinois' funding comes from voluntary contributions solicited, collected, and remitted by the telephone companies from Illinois ratepayers through their telephone bills.

Telecommunications relay service The Commission approved the Illinois Telecommunications Access Corporation's request for proposal for Telecommunications Relay Service in Docket No. 98-0870. Two companies bid to provide Illinois' relay service, and an order was entered by the Commission in Dockets 99-0442 and 99-0443, naming Sprint as the new relay service provider and approving the contract. Previously, AT&T provided relay service in Illinois.

Formal telecommunications cases Our Staff participated in the certification cases filed by 80 petitioners seeking Commission approval to offer local exchange service in Illinois. Consumer Services participated in the reorganization cases of MDJ Communications and El Paso City Telephone Company as well as MDJ Communications Company with Yates Telephone Company. CSD Staff participated in the GTE/Bell Atlantic merger and in the SBC/Ameritech merger.

Consumer Services is leading a campaign to educate telephone customers about choices in a competitive environment. A committee has been formed to execute the campaign over the next three years and funding is made available as a condition of Ameritech/SBC merger. Also the result of the merger, a Consumer Technology Fund has been formed to provide grant money from Ameritech to technology centers and fund a computer center.

The year 2000 offers many opportunities/challenges for Consumer Services. This includes:

- Telephone education campaign, referenced above.
- Electric Choice education campaign for business customers.
- Research and planning an Electric Choice education campaign for residential customers.
- Securing a new automated call distributor (ACD) system/upgrading our complaint tracking system.
- Implementing the Millennium Review Committee's eight (8) recommendations (Governor initiated/expert panel recommendations approved by the Commission).
- Spearheading improving telephone penetration.
- Community Technology Fund.

- Uniform business practices for electric companies.
- Market monitoring for electric and telephone companies.

CONSUMER EDUCATION/COMPLAINT ACTIVITY

HOW TO REACH CSD

Our Staff of consumer counselors is available to assist consumers with questions or complaints regarding utility service from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday.

- Our toll free hotline number is **1-800-524-0795** (calls initiated within Illinois)
- Our facsimile line is 217-524-6859
- Our mailing address is 527 East Capitol Avenue, Springfield, IL 62701
- Our e-mail address is **www.icc.state.il.us**

Consumers initiating calls outside of Illinois, utilities and others with an interest in Illinois regulations may contact the ICC's Consumer Services Division at 217-782-2024.

WHO WE ARE

The Illinois Commerce Commission was created by the Illinois General Assembly for the purpose of regulating public utilities and commercial transportation. The structure and major functions of the commission are derived from the Illinois Public Utilities Act (PUA), identifying the policy of the State to continue the effective and comprehensive regulation of public utilities. The goals and objectives of such regulation are to ensure efficiency, environmental quality, reliability, and equity. The Commission regulates telecommunications services to the extent mandated by Article 13 of the PUA and is overseeing the implementation of the Customer Choice Law, (electric restructuring) mandated by Article 16 of the PUA.

In 1972, the Commission's Consumer Services Division (CSD) was established and has evolved with changing utility regulation and services in Illinois. As the agency's principle contact with utility consumers in the state, CSD is uniquely positioned to provide important information to the Commission. Our staff consists of management; administrative support; consumer counselors, whose primary responsibility is to interface with consumers; members involved in consumer programs, which includes development of rules, carrier/supplier certification, and compliance issues.

CSD has continuous dialogs with consumers and utilities/service providers, allowing us to provide useful information to other divisions within the Commission and to the Commissioners concerning issues that develop. On an informal basis, the ICC's CSD contacts regulated utilities when issues of compliance and potential problems are raised by trends identified through consumer contacts.

CONSUMER EDUCATION

The role of Consumer Services as educator expands as the utility industry changes, particularly with the development of competition. CSD responds to consumer questions about regulations, services and products. Program Staff and Consumer Counselors research and share information on laws, Commission Orders, company tariffs, new services and products, marketing and consumer input on regulatory issues. Helping consumers to understand choices is an important responsibility for the ICC's CSD.

ADDRESSING COMPLAINTS

In addition to education, a primary responsibility of CSD is to provide assistance to consumers in the resolution of informal complaints and disputes with regulated utilities and other entities. Informal complaints, as the designation implies, are those handled by Staff, not formally considered by the Commission, and which do not result in an order by the Commission. The formal complaint process is available when complaints can not be satisfactorily resolved through Staff intervention.

Following is a description of methods used by counselors in addressing complaints and inquiries.

3-Way Calling

This is a process to interface directly with the company while the consumer is still on the phone. Certain problems and requests for assistance are well suited to this type of resolution. These include requests for payment arrangements, payment extensions, final notice prior to disconnection, repairs, medical certificates and billing issues that can be resolved during the initial contact. This method increases efficiency and, in most cases, results in a high degree of customer satisfaction. In 1999, more than 10,000 complaints were handled in this manner.

Investigative Complaints

Using this method, counselors notify the company of an informal complaint filed by the customer. The company must investigate the complaint and typically contacts the customer during the investigation. The company is required to furnish a report of the outcome along with supporting documentation. The counselor reviews the report to ensure that the company's action complies with Commission rules. Our Staff can call on other divisions to provide answers to technical questions; we get advice from engineers, economists, and financial experts. After the review, the counselor contacts the customer with an explanation of the results.

Consumer Services Online

Through its e-mail address, the ICC's CSD receives contacts from consumers concerned with a wide variety of non-emergency issues. Site instructions advise consumers with emergency matters regarding service to contact CSD by telephone. Electronic access to CSD provides a viable alternative to traditional mail and the toll free telephone hotline. During 1998, CSD took 179 complaints via our web site. During 1999, the number of complaints received by e-mail increased by 251% to 449 cases.

Company v Company

The ICC's CSD has developed procedures to facilitate resolution of complaints between companies that are competitors. The changing environment in the utility industry and the advent of competition have signaled the need for a venue in which no-fault compromises can be achieved, benefiting both the parties involved in the dispute and the consumers they serve. Experience confirms that all parties benefit when a complaint can be resolved informally, avoiding the need for a formal complaint.

RECORDING AND TRACKING DATA

Consumer Services Division has a computerized complaint tracking system which provides an accurate and readily available record of consumer contacts. Using the Automated Complaint Tracking System (ACTS), complaints are identified not only in such general categories as billing, credit and deposits, rates, service, termination; but also in very specific terms. Our reporting capabilities allow us great flexibility in searching the records created in individual cases and compiling data. With reporting functions tied to every data entry field, our ability to track information, analyze utility and consumer trends, and determine the root cause of problems is virtually unlimited.

Several features in ACTS provide assistance to counselors. Access to records and a "quick search" feature allows counselors to review recently filed complaints reducing the number of duplicate complaints sent to utilities.

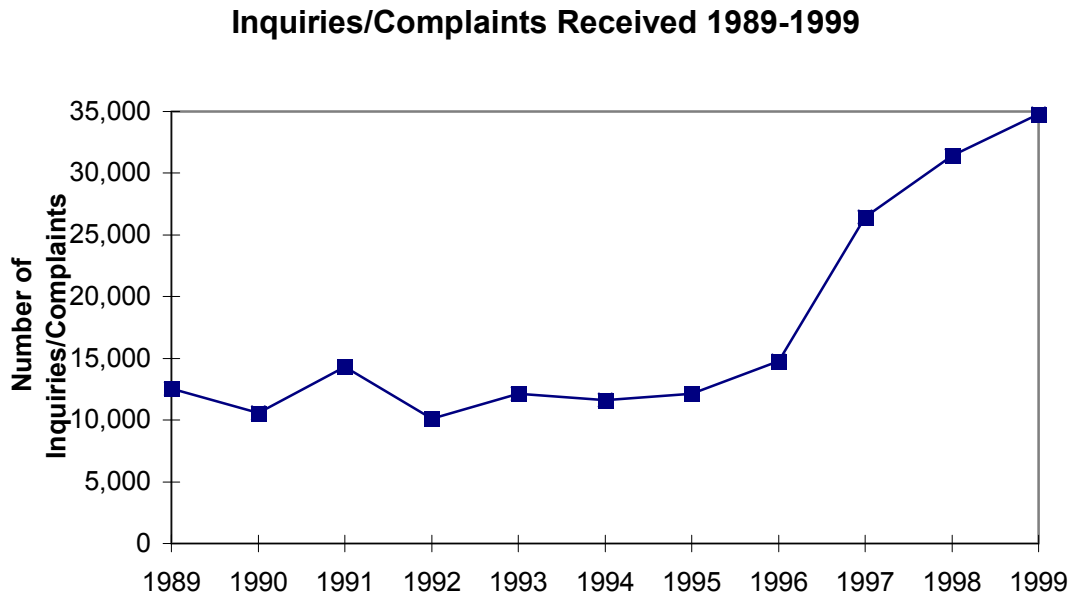
An important feature of ACTS is electronic exchange. Many major utilities receive and respond via e-mail to complaints presented by counselors. Utility responses are directly entered into ACTS, significantly reducing the task of data entry summarizing the utility's position pertaining to the individual complaint. Standardized letters regarding the most common complaint issues are stored in ACTS allowing staff to quickly and efficiently generate replies to consumers.

INFORMAL INQUIRY/COMPLAINT DATA

Counselors record informal inquiries, complaints, and opinions from consumers. Consumer education inquiries are typically answered during the initial contact. Customer opinions are also recorded during the initial contact.

Based upon the nature of the problem, the counselor determines if there is a need for investigation requiring contact with the company.

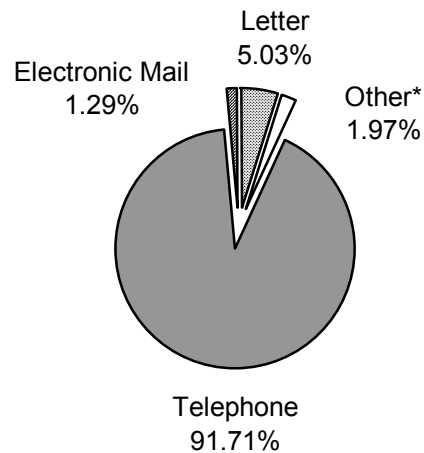
Graph 1



During 1999, CSD Staff recorded 34,799 contacts. Graph 1 depicts the increase in the number of contacts received from 1989 through 1999. Prior to 1996 the Division averaged about 12,000 inquiries/complaints each year. Increased staffing in 1996 allowed us to respond to nearly 15,000 inquiries/complaints. The increase during 1999 resulted from improved capability to receive and process inquiries/complaints, dedication of our Staff, and the consumers' growing need for information and assistance.

Graph 2

Origin of Inquiries/Complaints



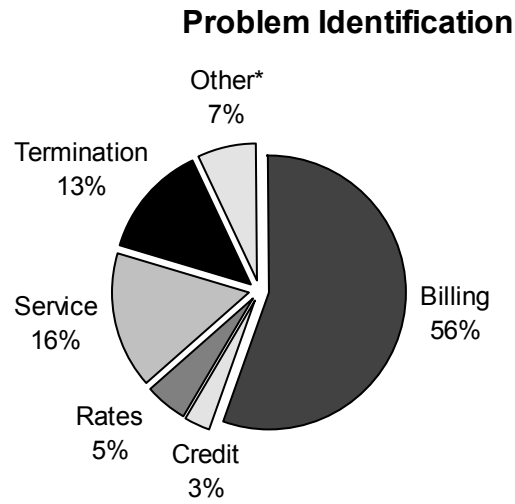
*Includes contacts such as: fax, teletypewriter and visit.

Most of the 34,799 cases recorded (91.7%) began with a telephone call to our toll-free number. We received 1,752 letters. Contacts by electronic mail increased from 179 in 1998 to 449 cases in 1999; we expect that this source of contact will continue to increase significantly.

The map on the next page shows the number of contacts originating from each county in Illinois.

Insert county map here – map will show the number contacts originating from each county in Illinois.

Graph 3



*Includes issues oriented contacts

Graph 3 represents the number of inquiries/complaints that were received during 1999, categorized by problem type. These categories include billing, credit/deposit, rates, service, termination, and other. This graph illustrates that 56% of the inquiries/complaints received related to the consumer's bill. CSD opened significantly fewer inquiries or complaints in the other categories.

Chart 1

TOP 10 INQUIRIES/COMPLAINTS	
Need payment arrangements (Billing)	4374
Seeking reconnection (Termination)	3125
Accuracy of bill- responsibility for account (Billing)	2771
Accuracy of bill- usage/consumption (Billing)	2544
Payment- deferred payment agreement (Billing)	1145
Other- issues oriented contacts	980
Timeliness of performed service- reconnect/disconnect (Service)	976
Payment- posting problems (Billing)	854
Accuracy of bill- other (Billing)	846
Dispute bill rendered by other company (Billing)	834

Chart 2

MEANS OF RESOLVING INQUIRIES/COMPLAINTS	
Information or explanation provided	20,652
Company compromised to settle	5,303
Company agrees to correct mistake or error	3,344
Complaint dismissed; groundless	1,108
Referral to other agency or Division	764
Customer did not pursue	750
ICC had no jurisdiction	668
Miscellaneous (resolution by means not on list)	541
Company unresponsive	356
Action initiated to correct problem	305
Pending long term utility action	259
Duplicate action by another counselor	225
Issue beyond time limit for complaint filing	215
Formal hearing sought	115
CSD received carbon copy response	97
Meter tested; billing correct	83
Customer withdraws complaint	59
Repeated Complaint	29
Mediation	12
Company does not have a certificate	8
TOTAL	34,893

During the calendar year 1999, CSD closed 34,893 cases. Although many of these cases were opened and closed during 1999 some were opened in 1998. After utilities research and reply to investigative complaints, CSD must review the response and contact the consumer with the outcome. This explains why investigative complaints opened late in the year are often closed the following year. Chart 2 shows the number of cases closed in 1999 by resolution category.

MEDIATION

The Mediation program is available to consumers who weren't satisfied with the results of informal complaints against Ameritech, ComEd, or Peoples Gas. Mediation offers the customer and the utility a chance to meet to further discuss, clarify, and provide documentation to support their contentions without escalating the complaint to a formal proceeding. The Center for Conflict Resolution (CCR), a non-profit organization based in Chicago, mediates these cases at no charge to the consumer, the utility or the ICC. The mediation takes place in Chicago; therefore, as a practical matter, this option is not extended beyond the Chicago area.

Between January 1, 1999 and December 31, 1999, 83 complaints were referred to the Staff coordinator for mediation. These cases do not always proceed to mediation, the complaint may be settled, the company may refuse to mediate, or the customer may refuse mediation. This year 75 of the 83 cases referred by counselors to the mediation coordinator were not mediated.

Eight complaints actually proceeded to mediation. In these cases, 6 resulted in agreement, 1 did not result in agreement, and 1 was settled prior to the mediation session.

Customers who have been referred to mediation continue to have the option of filing a formal complaint. Five of the 83 customers referred to the mediation coordinator filed a formal complaint. Of these, three cases were dismissed.

FORMAL COMPLAINTS

If a resolution is not reached through the informal process (including mediation), the consumer may file for a formal hearing. After the fully completed and notarized forms are submitted to the Commission, a hearing is scheduled. A Hearing Examiner presides over the case, which is similar to a court proceeding, considers testimony presented, reviews evidence and makes a recommendation to the Commissioners who render a decision.

During 1999, 115 customers requested formal complaint forms and 39 formal hearings were actually docketed. The 1999 formal complaint level is comparable to previous years despite the overall increased number of informal complaints. Commission decisions during 1999 granted relief in one case and in two cases relief was granted in part/denied in part.

JUSTIFIED COMPLAINTS

Counselors evaluate cases to determine if correct procedures were followed by the company in responding to the consumer's complaint prior to CSD intervention. A case is justified when, in the counselor's judgement, the company did not handle the dispute properly or effectively, or in handling the dispute, the company violated rules, regulations, orders, tariffs, or policy. Cases that are evaluated are those in which contact with the company is initiated and can include 3-way and investigative cases. The following tables indicate the percentages of justified complaints for energy and telecommunications with 30 or more complaints (investigative and 3-way calling), and water/sewer with 10 or more complaints (investigative and 3-way calling). The following charts list the utilities by industry in descending order beginning with the highest percentage of justified complaints.

Chart 3

ENERGY COMPANIES	JUSTIFIED COMPLAINTS	TOTAL COMPLAINTS	JUSTIFIED COMPLAINTS PERCENT OF TOTAL
ComEd	1717	8364	21%
North Shore Gas	8	42	19%
Peoples Gas	253	2077	12%
NICOR Gas	94	1038	9%
Illinois Power	22	336	7%
Ameren UE	2	58	3%
Ameren CIPS	5	164	3%
CILCO	3	123	2%

LOCAL EXCHANGE CARRIERS	JUSTIFIED COMPLAINTS	TOTAL COMPLAINTS	JUSTIFIED COMPLAINTS PERCENT OF TOTAL
MCI/WorldCom	104	319	33%
AT&T	17	225	8%
McLeod	5	79	6%
Midwestern	42	676	6%
GTE	24	552	4%
Ameritech	155	4037	4%
Gallatin River	1	60	2%

LOCAL TOLL CARRIERS	JUSTIFIED COMPLAINTS	TOTAL COMPLAINTS	JUSTIFIED COMPLAINTS PERCENT OF TOTAL
MCI/WorldCom	5	40	13%
AT&T	4	74	5%

LONG DISTANCE CARRIERS	JUSTIFIED COMPLAINTS	TOTAL COMPLAINTS	JUSTIFIED COMPLAINTS PERCENT OF TOTAL
Sprint	11	45	24%
MCI/WorldCom	66	553	12%
AT&T	28	473	6%

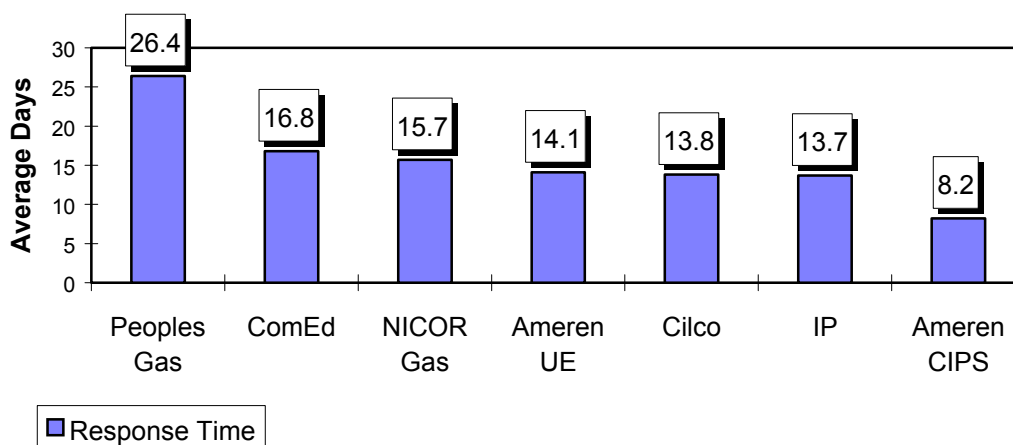
WATER/SEWER COMPANIES	JUSTIFIED COMPLAINTS	TOTAL COMPLAINTS	JUSTIFIED COMPLAINTS PERCENT OF TOTAL
Citizens Utilities	2	25	8%
Consumers IL Wtr.	3	64	5%

RESPONSE TIME

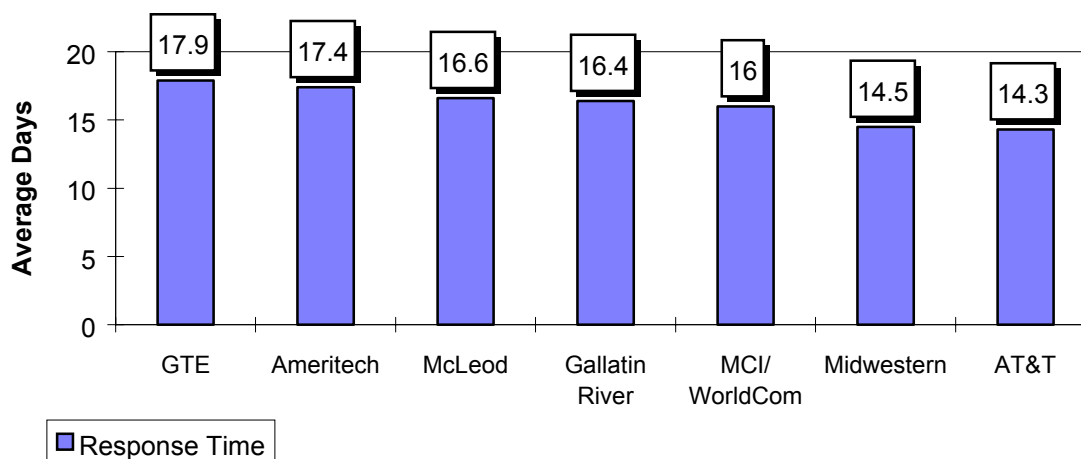
The following graphs show average response times for energy and telecommunications companies that received 25 or more investigative complaints and water companies with 10 or more investigative complaints during 1999. Investigative complaints are those which are not suited to or not resolved through 3-way calling and are presented to the utility for investigation.

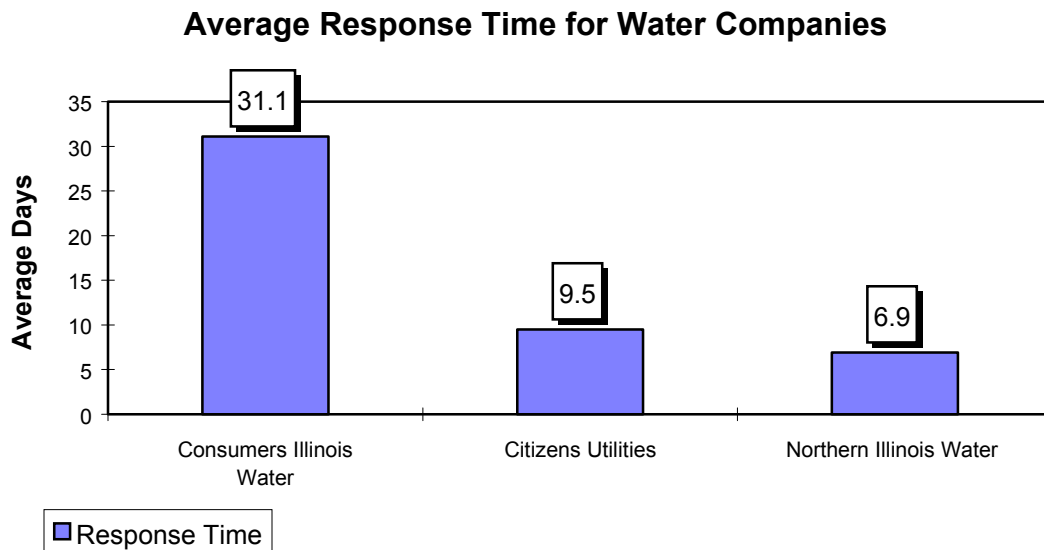
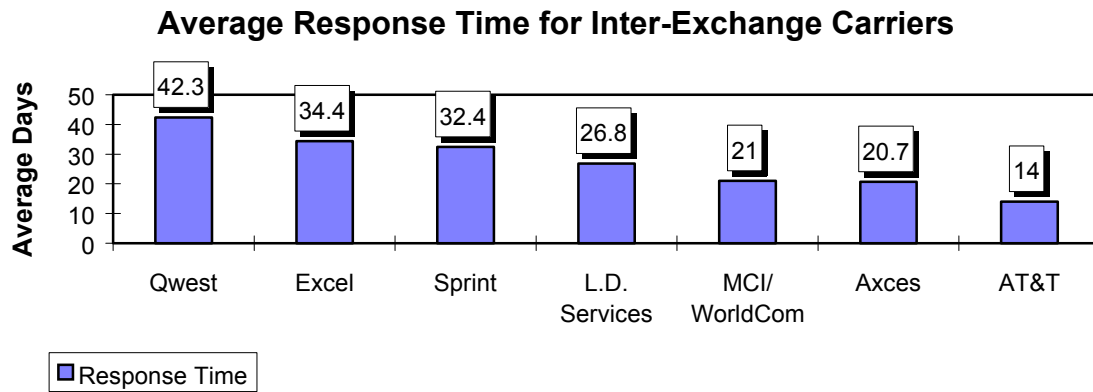
Graph 4

Average Response Time for Energy Companies



Average Response Time for Local Exchange Carriers



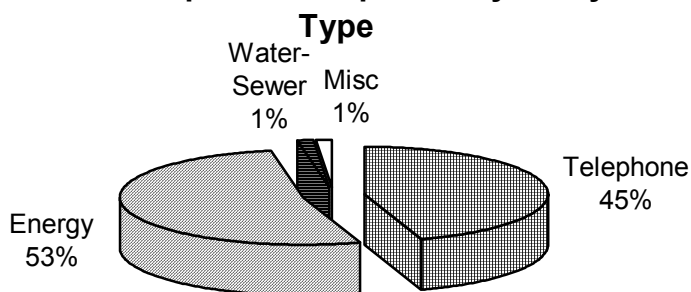


REVIEW OF INQUIRIES/COMPLAINTS DATA BY INDUSTRY

This section addresses and highlights trends in the numbers and types of inquiries and complaints for each industry. CSD categorizes the inquiries/complaints it receives according to the following industries: telephone, energy, water/sewer and miscellaneous.

Graph 5

1999 Inquiries/Complaints by Utility

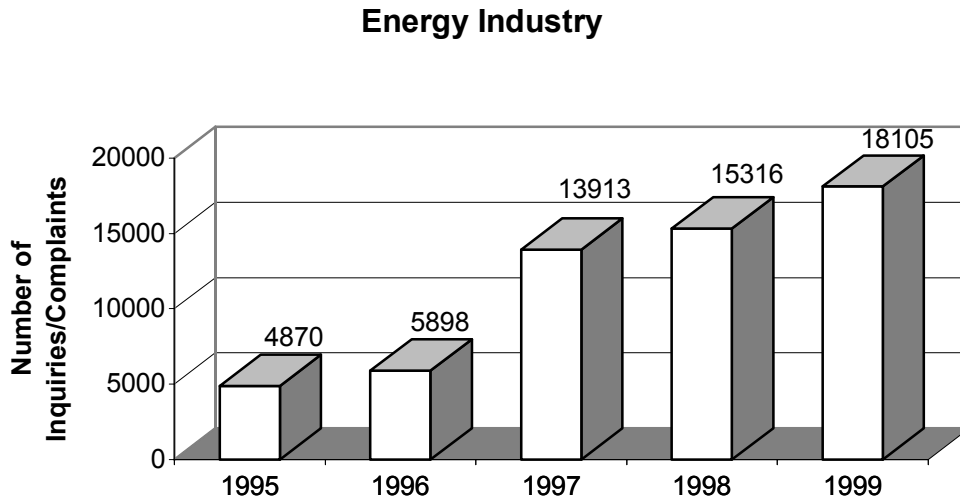


Graph 5 shows the inquiries/complaints by utility type for 1999. Telephone inquiries/complaints comprise 45% of the total number received during 1999; significant technological changes and deregulation in the industry account for much of the volume. Combining gas and electric results in 53% of the total inquiries/complaints attributed to the energy industry. The water/sewer industry accounts for 1% of the inquiries/complaints. The miscellaneous category includes companies such as pipeline and cellular.

The following pages will focus on three industries: energy (gas/electric combined), telephone and water/sewer. This section includes a five-year tracking of the number of inquiries/complaints by industry. Also included by industry are graphs comparing the number of complaints/inquiries by utility. The number of contacts by category are shown in charts for each industry. Note that all contacts recorded by counselors are included.

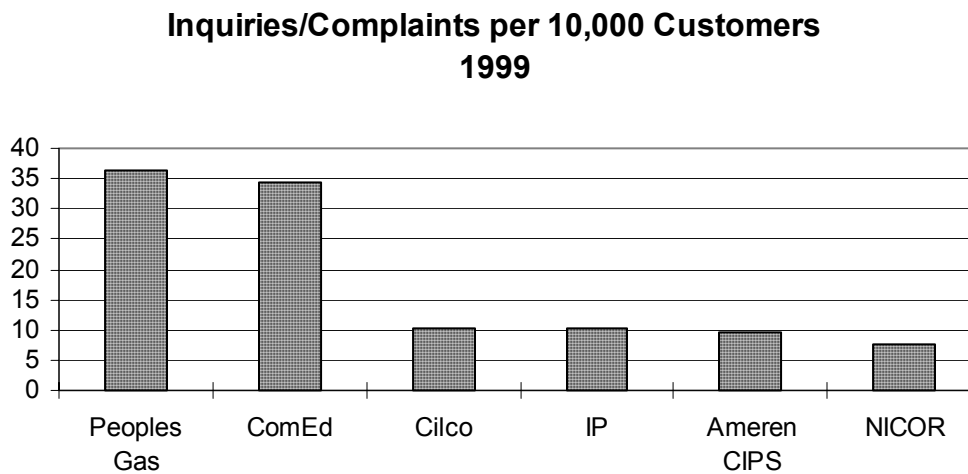
ENERGY INDUSTRY

Graph 6



Graph 6 shows the number of inquiries and complaints that were received each year by CSD for the electric and gas companies from 1995 through 1999.

Graph 7



Graph 7 illustrates the number of inquiries/complaints received per 10,000 customers for the major companies in the energy industry.

Chart 4

1999 ENERGY INQUIRIES/COMPLAINTS FOR SMALLER COMPANIES (ELECTRIC AND GAS)		
Company	Customers*	Complaints
Ameren UE	62,300	124
United Cities Gas	24,700	42
Midamerican	84,400	29
Interstate	13,400	6
Mt. Carmel	5,700	5
Illinois Gas	10,400	2

*Estimated Number

Chart 4 represents companies with less than 100,000 customers.

ENERGY INDUSTRY CONTACTS

Chart 5

BILLING	CONTACTS
Payment Arrangement	4,412
Usage/Consumption	1,670
Responsibility for Account	1,494
Meter	737
Bill/Statement	575
Payment- Other	499
Payment Posting Problem	403
Accuracy	323
Tampering	62
Repair/Service	28
Extension/Installation Dispute	19
SUBTOTAL	10,222

CREDIT/DEPOSIT	CONTACTS
Deposit Requirement	391
Service Denial	276
Deposit Administration	104
Deposit Amount/Conditions	99
Other	40
SUBTOTAL	910

RATES	CONTACTS
Inquiry	123
Rate Structure	64
Opinion - Rate in Effect	57
Proposed Rate	10
SUBTOTAL	254

SERVICE	CONTACTS
Timeliness of Reconnection/Disconnection	811
Timeliness - General	513
Interruptions	344
Conduct of Personnel	308
Service Quality	203
Safety	73
Equipment Problems	63
Extension/Availability	45
SUBTOTAL	2,360

TERMINATED/SEEKING RECONNECTION	CONTACTS
Seeks Assistance	2,438
Questions Regarding Procedures	367
Medical Certificate	230
Terminated in Error	180
Disputed Bill/Deposit	112
Other	75
Tampering	50
SUBTOTAL	3,452

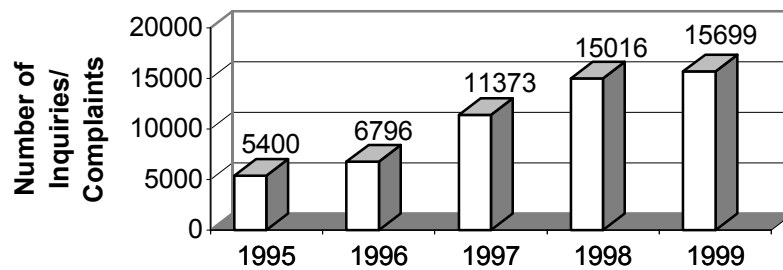
OTHER	CONTACTS
Issues Oriented Contacts	763
No Jurisdiction	121
SUBTOTAL	884

**TOTAL NUMBER OF ENERGY CONTACTS:
18,082**

TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

Graph 8

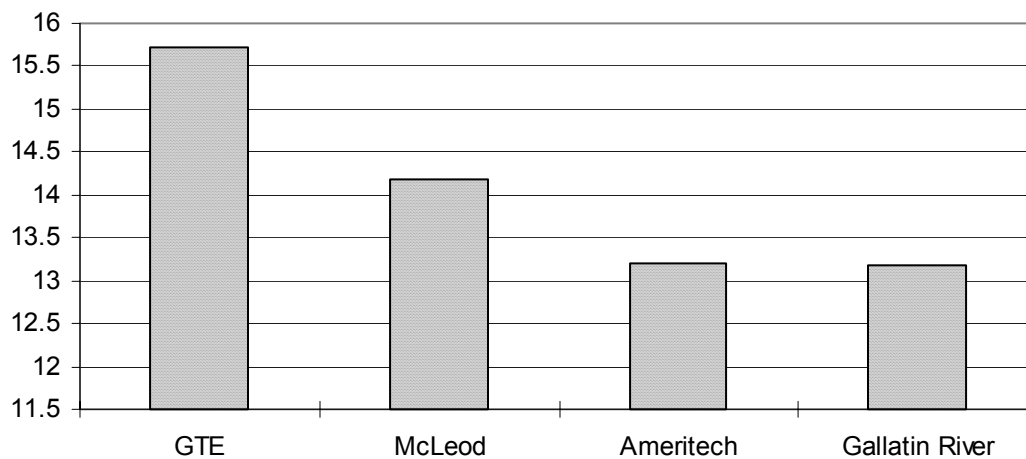
Telecommunications Industry



Graph 8 shows the number of inquiries and complaints that were received each year by CSD for the telephone industry from 1995 through 1999.

Graph 9

Inquiries/Complaints per 10,000 Access Lines 1999

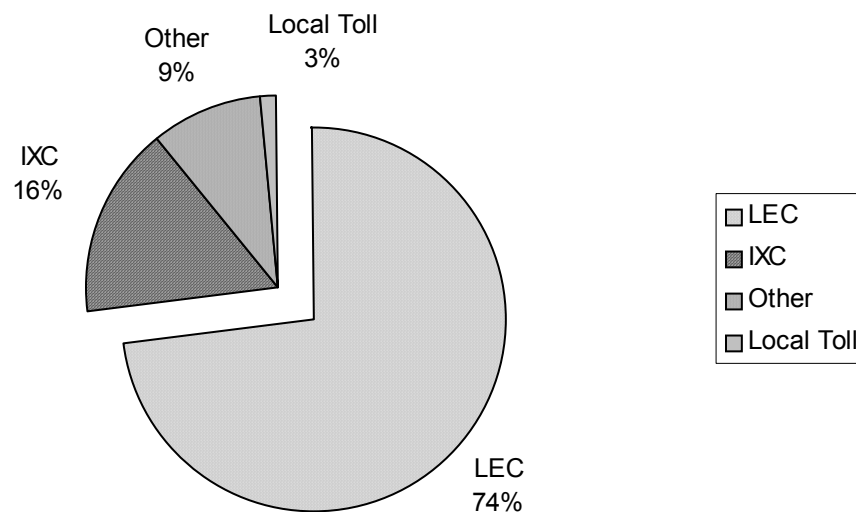


Graph 9 illustrates the number of inquiries and complaints per 10,000 access lines that were received for major local exchange carriers for 1999. Access lines include the number of residential and business phone lines used.

G

Graph 10

1999 Telecommunications Inquiries/Complaints by Company Type



Definitions for the above graph:

LEC - Local Exchange Carrier - a company that provides local exchange service

Local Toll - local calls that are made to locations outside the local exchange boundary, but within the Market Service Area (MSA)

IXC - Inter-Exchange Carrier - a company that provides service between exchanges and between Market Service Areas (MSAs)

Other - includes Cellular/Mobile, Provider Additional Service, Competitive Access Provider and Telephone

TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY CONTACTS

Chart 6

BILLING	CONTACTS
Payment Arrangements	1,888
Responsibility for Account	1,207
Usage/Consumption	732
Dispute - Rate Classification /Plan	669
Disputed Bill by Other Company	654
Accuracy - General	546
Bill Statement	519
Posting Problems	440
Bill Feature not Ordered	428
Payment - General	381
Repair/Service	147
Extension/Installation Dispute	16
SUBTOTAL	7,627

CREDIT & DEPOSIT	CONTACTS
Service Denial	159
Deposit Administration	24
Deposit Amount/Conditions	20
SUBTOTAL	203

RATES	CONTACTS
Rate Structure	600
Opinion of Rate in effect	349
Rate Inquiry	343
Proposed Rate Change	88
SUBTOTAL	1,380

SERVICE	CONTACTS
Timeliness of Performed Work	1,146
Quality	455
Poor Performance by Utility Personnel	356
Availability of Features & Equipment	337
Unauthorized Change of Service (slamming)	308
Equipment Problems	170
Service Interruptions	135
Conduct of Billing Agents/Outside Contractors	118
Safety	17
Service Extensions	14
SUBTOTAL	3,056

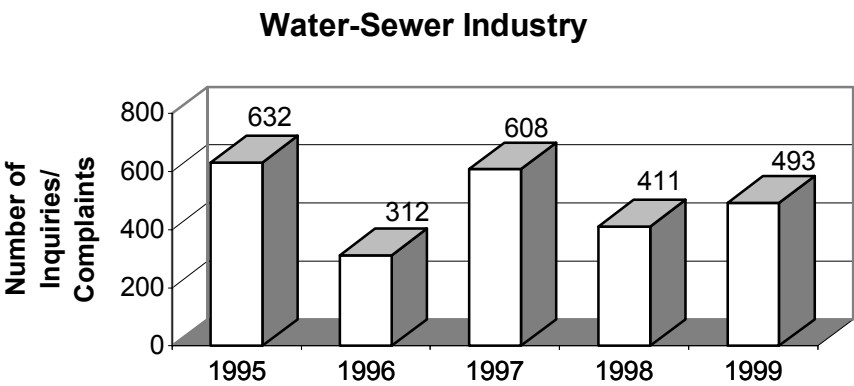
TERMINATED/SEEKING RECONNECTION	CONTACTS
Seeks Assistance	722
Questions Regarding Procedures	259
Disputes	89
Medical Certificate	78
SUBTOTAL	1,148

OTHER	CONTACTS
Issues Oriented Contacts	1,085
No Jurisdiction	225
SUBTOTAL	1,310

**TOTAL NUMBER OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS
CONTACTS: 14,724**

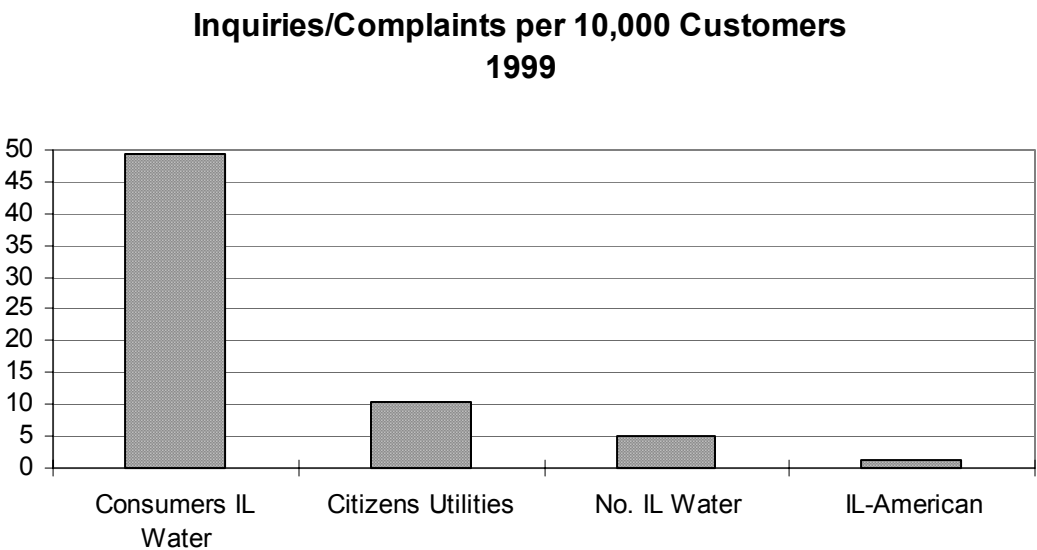
WATER & SEWER INDUSTRY

Graph 11



Graph 11 shows the number of inquiries/complaints that were received each year by CSD for the water/sewer industry from 1995 through 1999.

Graph 12



Graph 12 illustrates the number of inquiries and complaints per 10,000 customers that were received for the major companies in the water/sewer industry for 1999. The spike in Consumers Illinois Water contacts was due to a rate increase.

WATER & SEWER INDUSTRY CONTACTS

Chart 7

BILLING	CONTACTS
Usage/Consumption	49
Payment Arrangements	29
Payment/Billing General	23
Accuracy	20
Responsibility for Account	19
Bill Statement	11
SUBTOTAL	151

CREDIT & DEPOSIT	CONTACTS
Deposit Requirement	6
Deposit Amount or Conditions	5
Deposit Administration	3
Service Denial	2
SUBTOTAL	16

RATES	CONTACTS
Proposed Rate	106
Opinion-Rate in Effect	50
Rate Inquiries	10
Rate Structure	3
SUBTOTAL	169

SERVICE	CONTACTS
Service Quality	17
Timeliness of Performed Service	11
Equipment Problems/Safety/Interruption	9
Conduct of Personnel	5
Service Extension	3
SUBTOTAL	45

TERMINATED/SEEKING RECONNECTION	CONTACTS
Seeks Assistance	23
Questions Regarding Procedures	9
Miscellaneous	7
Medical Certificate	3
Disputed Bill or Deposit	2
SUBTOTAL	44

OTHER	CONTACTS
No Jurisdiction	47
Issues Oriented Contacts	21
SUBTOTAL	68

TOTAL NUMBER OF WATER AND SEWER CONTACTS: 493
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ACTIVITIES AND ISSUES

CONSUMER OUTREACH & EDUCATION

Consumer Services anticipates that its role in consumer outreach and education will expand as the utility industry changes; we look forward to the challenge. Currently, the ICC's CSD conducts meetings associated with rate increase requests of small water companies when community interest is expressed. The Staff is also available to witness meter tests performed by utilities and to make presentations on various consumer and regulatory matters to consumer groups. To keep abreast of consumer issues and concerns, CSD Staff is represented on the Chicago Energy Council, the Department of Commerce and Community Affairs Policy Advisory Council and the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC) Subcommittee on Consumer Affairs.

Public Forums

As part of its community outreach programs, CSD Staff participated in a public forum in July of 1999. The forum was held in response to a request by the Homeowner's Association to give customers an opportunity to express their concerns about a general increase in water rates proposed by Consumers Illinois Water Company (Docket 99-0288).

United States Energy Association Energy Industry Partnership Program

In June, Commissioner Ruth Kretschmer led a delegation of Commission Staff on an advisory mission to Kazakhstan. The purpose of the exchange visit was to establish a partnership between the Illinois Commerce Commission and the Agency of the Republic of Kazakhstan for Natural Monopoly Regulation and Competition Protection, continue the review of fundamentals of utility regulations policies and procedures in the United States and to develop a work plan for a series of future activities. CSD Program Director, Mike Gibson, was a member of Commission Staff who participated in that partnership exchange visit.

In September, a delegation from Kazakhstan spent several days at Commission offices in Chicago and Springfield. At the request of Commissioner Kretschmer, several members of CSD Staff made presentations pertaining to regulations, policies and procedures.

Customer Information

The Illinois Commerce Commission has developed a series of publications for consumer education and outreach. Our brochure, *It's Time to Get Plugged In*, is a consumer's guide to electric service restructuring in Illinois. Information includes what is changing, what consumers will be choosing, when options will be available, and a glossary of key terms. Topics discussed in other publications include using phones away from home, maximum rates allowed for operator service providers, "900" numbers, and resolving utility problems. A complete list and description of these publications can be found at the end of this document.

These publications and other useful customer information are available through the Commission's web site at www.icc.state.il.us. In increasing numbers, consumers access the Internet on a daily basis, Consumer Services Division contributes to updating and expanding the site. Making information conveniently and easily accessible to consumers 24 hours a day is part of CSD's goal of a comprehensive, interactive and "user-friendly" web site. Consumers are able to navigate from the home page, which contains separate areas/headings for electric, natural gas, telecommunications and other utility services.

Recent format changes make it easier for consumers to link to other areas of the web site. The addition of "Hot Topics," prominently featured on the home page directs consumers to current information.

Regulatory information including Commission rules and other documents are available through the Commission's web site. Administrative Code Part 280 provides detailed procedures for electric, gas, water and sewer utilities governing eligibility for service, deposits, payment practices and discontinuance of service; Administrative Code part 735 establishes procedures for telecommunications carriers. This information can be accessed at ***www.icc.state.il.us/icc/doclib/rules.asp***

ELECTRIC RESTRUCTURING IN ILLINOIS

The Commission continues efforts to implement the Electric Service Customer Choice and Rate Relief Law of 1997 (P.A. 90-561). CSD Staff has been involved in many rulemakings and other endeavors to implement this law. The following is a synopsis of the major proceedings during 1999.

Consumer Education Program

Details about the Consumer Education Program can be found in the **Consumer Programs** section of this report.

Delivery Services Tariffs

During 1999, members of CSD Staff participated in this significant task and the Commission approved new delivery services tariffs for the nine Illinois utilities in time for the beginning of customer choice in October 1999. Historically, customers paid the utility a single “bundled price” for electricity. This price included all of the costs associated with generating, transmitting and distributing power. Electric restructuring allows eligible customers to choose who provides the generation portion. The incumbent utility will continue to deliver the electricity to the customer, this service is referred to as the “delivery services” portion of the customer’s electric service. To offer the necessary service, new prices and terms and conditions had to be developed and approved.

Certification of Alternative Suppliers

Members of CSD Staff participated in two rulemakings to develop certification rules. To provide power and energy supply to retail customers in Illinois, Alternative Retail Electric Suppliers (ARES) must be certified by the Illinois Commerce Commission. Docket No. 98-0544, initiated on July 22, 1998, addressed the expedited certification of ARES that seek to serve only non-residential retail customers with maximum electrical demands of one megawatt or more. Docket No. 98-0649, initiated on September 23, 1998, establishes rules for ARES seeking to serve all other non-residential customers. The rules (83 Ill. Adm. Code Part 451) promulgated through these two dockets for ARES certification specify the level of managerial, technical and financial expertise required before a company can offer electricity for sale in Illinois. By the end of 1999, the Commission had certified 13 ARES. A list of certified suppliers can be found on the Commission’s web site under Plug in Illinois.

Lottery

Members of Consumer Services Division also participated in a docketed case which addressed the implementation of a lottery. Section 16-104 of the Public Utilities Act describes the process by which customers become eligible for choice on a phased in basis. Beginning October 1, 1999, delivery services were available to certain non-residential customers. Utilities offered delivery services to any non-residential retail customer with a maximum demand of 4 megawatts or more at a single site. Eligibility of other non-residential customers representing approximately 1/3 of remaining annual non-residential kilowatt-hour sales were determined by lottery as approved by the Commission in Docket 98-0650. Customers were required to register to participate in the lottery. Those chosen through the lottery were notified of their eligibility to choose an alternative supplier effective October 1, 1999. As the result of further legislation, certain ComEd industrial/manufacturing customers will be eligible for choice beginning June, 2000. Delivery services will be available to all remaining non-residential customers by December 31, 2000 and to all residential customers May 1, 2002.

Electric Reliability Survey (Docket 98-0878)

CSD led the electric reliability survey rulemaking. A customer satisfaction survey required to be filed by each electric utility or alternative retail electric supplier owning, controlling, or operating transmission and distribution facilities and equipment was developed during 1999. The survey, which was brought about by the Electric Service Customer Choice and Rate Relief Law of 1997, was the topic of a series of workshops during the summer of 1999. After considering recommendations from utility personnel, Commission Staff, a survey consultant hired by the Commission and interested parties, general agreement was reached for a telephone survey document and rules for conducting the survey. Both documents are available for review at the Commission's web site.

ComEd Claim Procedure (Docket 99-0022)

CSD took the lead in establishing a comprehensive procedure for resolving and paying claims for actual damages and replacement value under Section 16-125 (e) and (f) of the Public Utilities Act. Any electric utility with over one million customers can be held responsible for damages customers sustain when more than 30,000 customers are subjected to continuous power interruption of 4 hours or more that results in transmission of power less than 50% of the standard voltage or that results in total loss of power transmission. The Commission may grant a waiver or make a determination of no liability in some cases.

Environmental Disclosure

CSD participated in creating requirements for environmental disclosure. Required by law, the Commission (in Docket No. 98-0194) developed rules concerning environmental disclosure that must be made to customers. The information includes the known sources of electricity and the amounts of carbon dioxide, nitrous oxides and sulfur dioxide emissions and nuclear waste attributable to the known sources of electricity. The rules require electric utilities and ARES to provide the information to customers on a quarterly basis and to provide the Commission with the information to include on its web site. The information has been available since April 1999.

Energy Assistance Program Design Group

The legislation includes an amendment to the Energy Assistance Act of 1985 which created the Energy Assistance Program Design Group and charged it with advising the General Assembly with respect to designing a low income energy assistance program for the period beginning on July 1, 2002. The working group comprises: legislators; designees from certain state agencies; consumers --low-income, residential, commercial and industrial; public utilities; municipal utilities; and cooperatives. The Illinois Commerce Commission is represented on this group by a CSD Staff member.

PILOT PROGRAMS OFFERED BY UTILITIES

Illinois Power

Illinois Power Company implemented the Clean Start Program to help Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) customers pay off outstanding utility bills. This program, involves matching contributions from both Illinois Power and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs (DCCA), which would cover up to 2/3 of the amounts owed for gas and/or electric service. The funds are available if the customer: pays 1/3 of the past due utility balance within 6 months, is eligible to receive LIHEAP funds, and pays current bills as they become due.

Peoples Gas

The "Customer Choice" Pilot Program is a program offered to small commercial and industrial customers throughout Peoples service territory. The program, originally a two year trial period starting November 1, 1997, and continuing through October 31, 1999, has been granted an extension through June 30, 2000. Customers are allowed to buy their gas supply from a number of established non-utility marketing firms. The purpose of this program is to extend the benefits of gas industry competition to another level of local consumers. The experience gained from the pilot will provide a basis for expanding choice to all customers.

NICOR Gas

In January 1998 Nicor Gas began a three-year natural gas pilot program "Customer Select", that would run through April 30, 2001. This program allows customers to choose their natural gas supplier. The first phase of the "Customer Select" program was offered to more than 150,000 commercial and industrial customers throughout Nicor's service territory who could choose their natural gas supplier from a list of 16 participating suppliers. The 20,000 available slots were filled within the first six weeks of the sign-up period.

Phase two of the program began January 6, 1999, with 130,000 commercial and industrial customers eligible to select a supplier, in addition to more than 83,000 of Nicor Gas' residential customers.

The third phase offers an Open Enrollment period from January 6, 2000 through March 31, 2000. Expansion of the program will continue in the third phase with the number of participating commercial and industrial customers increasing from 60,000 to all non-residential customers.

Regardless of whether a customer decides to participate in the program, Nicor Gas continues to deliver the gas, read meters, and maintain its pipeline system. During the pilot, customers are allowed to return to Nicor Gas without any charge from Nicor, however they may be subject to penalties from their alternative supplier, depending on the terms of the contract.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS ISSUES AND ACTIVITIES

New Local Exchange Carriers (C-LECs)

During 1999, 80 petitions were filed by companies seeking Commission certification to provide local exchange service, through resale or facilities based service. CSD Staff has participated in all of the "new LEC" proceedings through testimony or cross examination. CSD's interest in these cases is to ensure that the new service providers meet the requirements of the ICC rules, including the solicitation, collection and remittance of monies for the various programs. The rules which fall within the purview of the Consumer Services Division deal with TTY distribution; telecommunications relay service; telephone assistance

programs; credit, billing and termination of telephone service; pay-per-call services, and preservation of telephone company records. To date, a total of 316 petitions have been filed with the Commission.

Revision to Illinois Administrative Code Part 730 (Docket 98-0453)

The 83 Illinois Administrative Code Part 730 prescribes the standards of service for telephone utilities. During hearings to revise Code Part 730, Consumer Services presented information and testified in favor of establishing a customer call answer time standard. Due to these efforts local phone company business and repair offices are required to answer customer calls, on average, within 60 seconds or less. This, along with other statistical information, will be compiled by the company and reported to the Commission for review each year.

Reorganization and Mergers

Our Staff participated in cases pertaining to the reorganization of MDJ Communications and El Paso Telephone Company (Docket 98-0754) and MDJ Communications and Yates City Telephone (Docket 99-0027). Staff activities including review of petitions, data requests and proposed orders help ensure that the reorganization would not diminish the utility's ability to provide service.

In Docket 99-0303, GTE obtained Commission approval to remove extended area service (EAS) from its Hettick and Chesterfield Exchanges in Carlinville. Staff's participation ensured that customers were properly educated about the impact of the switch prior to its implementation.

CSD Staff participated in the GTE/Bell Atlantic merger (Docket 98-0866), sponsoring testimony regarding best practices, existence of Illinois offices, low income telephone programs, and services for people with disabilities. With approval of the merger, Staff will monitor ICC merger conditions along with FCC merger conditions pertaining to Enhanced Lifeline Plans offered to states.

In the Global Crossing/Frontier merger (Docket 99-0237), Staff sponsored testimony regarding the company's staffing levels in Illinois, existence of Illinois offices, service quality, maintaining Illinois resources, customer benefits, consumer education, services for people with disabilities, and low income telephone programs. Staff is monitoring compliance with merger conditions.

Consumer Services Division Staff participated in the SBC/Ameritech merger (Docket 98-055) by sponsoring testimony regarding SBC's best practices, sales and marketing practices, services for people with disabilities. Staff is monitoring merger conditions and is actively participating in the conditions establishing the Community Education Fund and the Community Technology Fund. Additionally, Staff will be monitoring ICC merger conditions along with FCC merger conditions pertaining to Enhance Lifeline Plans offered to states.

Issues Affecting Consumers

Area Codes

Prior to 1999, CSD received and responded to a significant number of consumer inquiries and complaints about potential changes to Illinois' area codes. Such changes are confusing and potentially expensive to consumers. In the future, new area codes in Illinois will be implemented as overlays instead of geographic splits so that existing customers will not have to change their numbers. In October of 1998, Illinois was the first state allowed by the FCC to implement a mandatory number pooling program. Since its inception, this program has greatly delayed the need for the creation of more area codes in the Chicagoland area. Additionally, the ICC has acquired a temporary waiver for Illinois of the FCC's 10-digit dialing requirement. The number of consumer contacts on the topic of area codes dropped considerably in 1999. A detailed history on this matter, can be accessed from the

Telecommunications Division's section on the ICC web site at:

<http://www.icc.state.il.us/icc/home/tc.asp>

Classification of Calling Areas

Counselors provided consumers with information on the three basic types of direct dial telephone calling services – local services, local toll or intra-LATA, and long distance or inter-LATA. Many consumers have the misconception that area codes and geographical community borders always define their calling areas. In certain instances, this may be true. However, Illinois contains 18 different LATAs (Local Access and Transport Areas), and it is these borders which more accurately define a consumer's calling areas.

Rates and Calling Plans

In helping consumers consider options, CSD advises customers to examine their own patterns of usage and needs when considering potential changes to their services. We suggest getting details in writing when shopping for services, as disputes may arise when salespersons' promises do not match the actual company rates or product.

Bill Clarity

Consumer Services Division devoted much time and energy in 1999 to resolving issues of confusion over the content of consumers telecommunications bills. Customers expect to be able to understand their bills; however, consumers may be billed by many different companies for a variety of related (or in some cases, unrelated) services and products. Traditionally, local phone companies have been the primary billing agents for telecommunications services. A majority of complaints received by CSD pertain to billing and many of these are related to bill clarity.

Slamming and Cramming

Legislation enacted in 1998 provided Illinois' consumers with greater protections against unauthorized changes in their pre-selected carriers (slamming) and against unauthorized enrollment in and billing for additional telecommunications services (cramming). The new law has allowed the ICC, through the Consumer Services Division, to require specific answers and compliance from companies when consumers allege cramming or slamming. In addition, the threat of penalties contained in the new law, combined with an aggressive pursuit of complaints, has coincided with a dramatic drop in the number of slamming and cramming complaints received. These issues are still significant problems, but they do not hold nearly the same high profile among the other categories of complaints as they did before the new law. Under this legislation, Consumer Services Division provided the ICC with testimony and consumer witnesses in a citation case it brought against Telco Partners, Inc. in 1999.

Local Competition

Increasingly, consumers are exploring alternative providers of local phone service in Illinois. Local competitor companies may choose to lease and re-sell the incumbent company's services to consumers; they may provide their own facilities; or they may offer competitive service using a combination of leased and facilities-based equipment and software. In addition, since each competitor may have different agreements with the incumbent, there are many new issues facing consumers as Illinois transitions to a more fully competitive phone environment. During 1999, Consumer Services Division provided assistance to consumers of competitive providers with problems that occurred with the competitors and with the incumbent company. In addition, Consumer Services worked with competitors which are new to the Illinois market in order to ensure that their actions and policies complied with our State's requirements.

CONSUMER PROGRAMS

CONSUMER Restructuring)	EDUCATION	PROGRAM	(Electric
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In crafting the law that restructures the electricity industry in Illinois, lawmakers recognized that consumers would need meaningful information allowing them to evaluate goods and services offered by new marketers and sellers. The law required the Commission to implement and maintain a consumer education program to provide residential and small commercial retail customers with information to help them understand their service options in a competitive electric services market, as well as their rights and responsibilities. As required by Section 16-117 of the Public Utilities Act, the Commission formed a working group for the purpose of creating educational materials to be distributed to electric customers.

The Working Group met in open meetings and a vendor, MWW/Agenda was retained to assist the group. A bill insert and a brochure were developed to satisfy the requirement for printed material. In March 1999, the Commission approved the printed educational material and recommendations for implementing the consumer education program submitted by the Working Group.

The bill insert was sent by utilities by May 15, 1999 and ARES are required to send the bill insert in their first mailing to potential customers or prior to executing an agreement or contract with a customer. The vendor developed an implementation plan to conduct targeted media relations activities together with grassroots outreach focused on small commercial electricity customers. In addition, a video, a media kit and public service announcements were developed. Through speaking engagements and media interviews, the Commission's Chairman, Commissioners, and Executive Director have contributed to the outreach efforts of the campaign. The Commission maintains a consumer education web site at www.icc.state.il.us/pluginillinois where consumers can access the approved material and other pertinent information including a list of certified suppliers.

TELETYPEWRITER TELECOMMUNICATIONS	DISTRIBUTION RELAY SERVICE	AND
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The Commission designed and implemented a program whereby the local exchange carriers (LECs) provide a Teletypewriter (TTY) to persons with hearing and speech disabilities, or organizations whose primary purpose is serving persons with hearing and speech disabilities. The local exchange carriers provide a telecommunications relay service (TRS), which links people who use a TTY and people who use a standard telephone. There is a charge for each subscriber line to offset the costs incurred by the local exchange carriers. The Commission ordered the line charge to be lowered to 6 cents in May 1999.

The TTY distribution program and relay center are administered by the Illinois Telecommunications Access Corporation (ITAC), a not-for-profit corporation which includes all the LECs in Illinois. An Advisory Council comprised of 7 members who are users of the TTY and TRS provide input to ITAC as well as to the Commission Staff Liaison.

Since the program's inception in November 1988, 7,361 TTYs have been distributed. Among the recipients of these devices, 67 not-for-profit organizations have benefited from this program. During 1999, over 1.8 million calls were handled through the relay system, and 297 TTYs were distributed through 19 centers located throughout the state. ITAC distributed 4 TTYs with a large visual display this year, bringing the total to 180. There were 2 telebraille machines distributed this year, bringing the total to 20. The total number of calls processed by the relay service since June 1990 has reached over 11 million.

ITAC continued to distribute its "Kids Talk Program", which provided a curriculum and study aids to educate teachers, students and their families about ITAC's programs. The package includes an activity book, a three-part lesson plan, history of the TTY, poster, pencil, pencil sharpener, crayons, ruler, etc. To this date, approximately 10,000 packets have been distributed to teacher's statewide.

UNIVERSAL TELEPHONE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (UTSAP)

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to take the necessary steps to establish support mechanisms to ensure the delivery of affordable telecommunications service to all Americans, including low-income consumers. On May 7, 1997, the FCC issued an order that required states to implement Link Up and Lifeline Programs by January 1, 1998.

The Universal Telephone Assistance Corporation (“UTAC”) and the Commission Staff worked diligently to revise 83 Illinois Administrative Code Part 757, “Telephone Assistance Programs” to incorporate the newly designed Link Up and Lifeline Programs.

Link Up is a federally funded program that assists households by paying 50% (up to \$30) of the cost of installing local telephone service in their principal place of residence. Lifeline is a federally funded program that provides \$5.25 towards the monthly charge for local telephone service.

The Universal Telephone Service Assistance Program (“UTSAP”), funded by voluntary contributions from Illinois telephone consumers, provides supplemental assistance to individuals who receive assistance from the Link Up program. In addition to the 50% waiver, \$10 assistance was applied to the consumer’s installation charge from UTSAP funds. Effective October, 1998, the supplemental assistance was raised from \$10 to the remaining 50% of the installation charge for eligible telecommunications carriers (“ETC”). Carriers who have not applied for ETC status do not receive the federal funding, however, they are eligible for 50% of the installation charge from UTSAP. Additionally, on December 15, 1998, UTAC petitioned the Commission for a monthly supplemental assistance amount of \$1.50 to be added to the existing \$5.25. This allowed the Commission to request additional federal support equal to one-half of any support generated from Illinois, bringing the total amount of monthly supplemental assistance to \$7.50. The amount of supplemental assistance is reviewed on an annual basis by the Commission according to the level of voluntary contributions.

To be eligible, recipients must currently receive benefits from one of the following programs: Food Stamps, Medicaid, Federal Public Housing, Supplemental Security Income (“SSI”), and Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (“LIHEAP”). UTSAP is administered by a not-for-profit Universal Telephone Assistance Corporation (UTAC). The UTAC Board of Directors has 9 members consisting of 5 representatives from local exchange companies, 2 members representing ratepayers, and 2 members representing low-income consumers.

The following table shows the number of recipients and voluntary contributions to the program since March 1993.

DATE	LINK-UP RECIPIENTS	LIFELINE RECIPIENTS	CONTRIBUTIONS
1993	15,267	--	\$242,997
1994	26,634	--	\$1,015,726
1995	24,000	--	\$801,423
1996	10,249	--	\$882,014
1997	6,720	--	\$855,600
1998	12,050	55,500	\$922,250
1999	12,200	53,300	\$911,500

LOW INCOME HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (LIHEAP)

Financial assistance is available to low income households in Illinois for energy bills. A household is eligible if its income is at or below 125% of the federal poverty guideline. The program is administered by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs through thirty-five agencies that operate in all Illinois counties. Funding for the program comes from two sources. One source is a federal government block grant through the Department of Health and Human Services. Beginning in January 1998, state funding has been made available as a result of a surcharge which is added to the electric and gas bills of all customers of investor owned utilities. Electric cooperatives and municipally owned gas and electric systems have a choice of whether to assess the surcharge. The amounts which are collected are added to the federal LIHEAP funds. A portion of LIHEAP funds are also used for weatherization and program administration.

PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE

The Illinois Commerce Commission has developed a series of publications for consumer education and outreach. Following is a listing of those which may be of interest to both utility consumers and individuals needing information on the Commission.

The Ratepayer's Bill of Rights: is a list of ten basic rights all Illinois utility consumers should expect.

Facts About Consumer Complaints: outlines the two basic levels of complaints, informal and formal, which the Illinois Commerce Commission handles.

Your Quick Reference Guide to Preparing for a Formal Complaint Hearing: is a consumer's "how-to" guide for preparing for a formal complaint hearing with topics such as: setting the hearing date, obtaining witnesses, supplying the necessary documentation, following the hearing procedures, accepting or appealing the Commission's decision, and filing for a rehearing.

Where Did You Learn to Talk Like That?: is a dictionary of terms, titles, and phrases frequently used at the Illinois Commerce Commission. It includes terms such as "cogeneration," "docket," "interexchange carrier," "tariffs," etc.

ENERGY and WATER/SEWER

InfoCards: (informational postcards) offer consumers practical information pertaining to rules for electric, gas, water/sewer utilities in an easy-to-read, single sheet format. There are 7 unique InfoCards which address consumers' rights and responsibilities with regard to: 1. Utility Bills; 2. Payment Plans for Utility Service; 3. Disconnecting Utility Service; 4. Reconnecting Utility Service; 5. Deposits for Utility Service; 6. Resolving Your Utility Problems; and 7. Mediation. The post card format allows counselors to expeditiously send useful information to consumers.

InfoPac: (informational packets) provide the identical information as the InfoCard, but in one document. The InfoPac is distributed to consumers who require information on several topics at once. Additionally, the ICC provides copies to local administering agencies which provide intake for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), to community groups who work with low income consumers and to people who attend consumer forums.

Rights and Responsibilities as an Electric, Gas or Water Utility Customer: provides an overview of the utility consumers' rights and responsibilities; it does not include telephone service.

ELECTRIC RESTRUCTURING

A Consumer's Guide to Electric Service Restructuring: provides information about electric service restructuring in Illinois. It includes topics such as what is changing, what consumers will be choosing, when options will be available, and a glossary of key terms.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Local Telephone Service Your Rights and Responsibilities as a Consumer: provides an overview of consumer rights and responsibilities related to local exchange service.

Smart Shoppers Guide to Using Phones Away from Home: informs and cautions telephone users to be aware of charges levied by Operator Service Providers when using telephones away from home. It also addresses the consumers rights to access the carrier of their choice and to be notified of the rates which will be assessed to them.

Rates and Charges for Using an Operator's Service in Illinois: is a postcard which provides the maximum rates per minute for intrastate calls and the maximum surcharges for making operator-assisted calls. In addition, it explains what consumers can do if they have been overcharged. This is updated annually based on the approved rates.

What You Should Know About Using "900" Numbers: highlights 83 Illinois Administrative Code Part 772 by providing information on pay-per-call services. Included is information about the preamble that information providers must provide and customer rights regarding charges.